

Testimony of Sally Tamarkin
In support of HB 6452, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*
Judiciary Committee
March 19, 2009

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and committee members, I am a lifelong Connecticut resident, born, raised and currently living in New Haven. I am writing to express my support for HB 6452, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*.

As you know, if this bill becomes law, it would simply add the phrase “gender identity or expression” to our state’s non-discrimination law. These four words would go a long way toward protecting some of our state’s most vulnerable residents—transgender identifying and gender non-conforming individuals—from the kind of discrimination that can easily ruin one’s career, livelihood, housing opportunities and access to myriad other opportunities to which all CT residents are equally entitled.

The debate over the possible passage of this bill has become, over the last several years, an ideological battlefield. Opponents of the bill paint it as an effort to extend “special rights” to a fringe group of our state’s citizenry while the bill’s supporters exhaust resources trying to prove that our fellow human beings deserve the same protections already afforded to us based on our race, sex, sexual orientation and other identifying characteristics. Perhaps those discussions were important ones to have when this bill made its initial appearance before the CT General Assembly in 2005. However, in the four years this bill has been before CGA committees, more than ten states and numerous municipalities have expanded their non-discrimination law to include gender identity and gender expression. Institutions large and small—including CT’s own corporations and universities—have similarly expanded their non-discrimination protections.

What does this mean? That in the year 2009, more and more people and institutions share the perspective that to exclude an entire population from the protections so crucial to quality of life that we codify them through state law for a variety of other protected classes, is nothing less than discrimination. Now (in the bill’s fifth year) is time to walk in step with other states, organizations, companies, and agencies that recognize the need to ensure that all of our state’s residents are protected from discrimination regardless of whether or not their perceived gender identity or expression “matches” their assigned sex at birth.

I urge you to support the passage of HB 6452, *An Act Concerning Discrimination*, both in your committee and on the floors of the House and Senate. Please put an end to the prolonged discussion that only serves to continue to prevent our fellow CT residents from accessing crucial protections.